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ACCOUNT *of a* SINGULAR CUSTOM *at* METELIN, *with ſome* CONJECTURES *on the* ANTIQUITY *of its* ORIGIN. *By the Right Honourable* JAMES, *Earl of* CHARLEMONT, *Preſident R. I. A.*

Read Dec. 19, 1789.

THOUGH the extreme beauty and amenity of the Grecian iſlands, eſpecially thoſe on the Aſiatick ſide of the Egean ſea, may render it difficult to make a choice among them, yet, if I were deſired to declare a preference, I ſhould probably fix on Metelin, the ancient Leſbos.—This enchanting iſland, proud of the birth of Alceus and of Sappho, ſtill retains thoſe charms which gave riſe and inſpiration to their poetry; and though its groves no more reſound with their ſacred ſtrains, the cauſe that inſpired them ſtill ſeems to exiſt, and love ſtill lingers in his favourite retreat.—

Spirat adhuc Amor
Vivuntque commiſſi Calores
Æoliæ Fidibus Puellæ!

NATURE here reigns triumphant, and by ſhewing what ſhe can perform alone and unaſſiſted, teaches us to deſpiſe the weak efforts of her inadequate mimick.—The mountains, whoſe rugged tops exhibit a pleaſing interſperſion of rocks and of pine groves, have their green ſides, for many miles along the coaſt, covered with olives, whoſe leſs agreeable verdure is corrected, embelliſhed, and brightened by a lively mixture of bays and of laurels aſpiring to the height of foreſt trees, of myrtles, pomegranates, and of arbutes, rich at once in bloſſom and in berry, of mulberries growing wild, and laden with fruit, and of every other tree

> Of nobleſt kind for ſight, ſmell, taſte!

While the luxuriant vine, climbing wild and unreſtrained even to their topmoſt branches, adorns and enriches them with its vivid green, and with its cluſtering fruit.—Winter is here unknown.—The climate forbids it.—The verdure is perpetual, and the frequency of evergreens gives to December the colour of June.—The parching heat of ſummer is never felt.—The thick ſhade of trees, and thouſands of cryſtal ſprings, which every where ariſe, and form themſelves into unnumbered rivulets, joined to the refreſhing ſea breeze, the conſtant companion and corrective of noontide heat, qualify the burning air, and render the year a never ending May—

> ——————Airs, vernal airs!
> Breathing the ſmell of field and grove, attune
> The trembling leaves, while univerſal Pan,
> Knit with the Graces, and the hours in dance,
> Leads on the eternal ſpring!—

No

No wonder then if the inhabitants,. the better to enjoy theſe various beauties, ſhould conſtruct their houſes in the following peculiar manner:—Each houſe is a ſquare tower neatly built of hewn ſtone, ſo high as to overtop the trees, and to command a view of the ſea and neighbouring iſlands.—The lower ſtories are granaries and ſtore-houſes, and the habitable apartments are all at the top, to which you aſcend by a ſtone ſtair, built, for the moſt part, on the outſide and ſurrounding the tower, ſo that from the apartment the trees are overlooked, and the whole country is ſeen, while the habitations themſelves, which are very numerous, peering above the groves, add life and variety to the enchanting proſpect, and give an air of human population to theſe woodlands, which might otherwiſe be ſuppoſed the region of Dryads, of Naiads, and of Satyrs.

But the charms of this delightful ſpot have ſo far tranſported my imagination that I have almoſt forgotten the ſubject of which, in this eſſay, I meant to treat, and which is no other than a remarkable and ſingular cuſtom of this iſland, peculiar, I believe, to itſelf, and, as far as I know, never yet detailed by any traveller.

The women here ſeem to have arrogated to themſelves the department and privileges of the men.—Contrary to the uſage of all other countries, the eldeſt daughter here inherits, and the ſons, like daughters every where elſe, are portioned off with ſmall dowers, or, which is ſtill worſe, turned out, pennyleſs, to ſeek their fortune.—If a man has two daughters, the eldeſt, at her marriage, is entitled to all her mother's poſſeſſions, which are by far

far the greater part of the family eſtate, as the mother, keeping up her prerogative, never parts with the power over any portion of what ſhe has brought into the family, until ſhe is forced into it by the marriage of her daughter, and the father alſo is compelled to ruin himſelf by adding whatever he may have ſcraped together by his induſtry.—The ſecond daughter inherits nothing, and is condemned to perpetual celibacy.—She is ſtyled a Calogria, which ſignifies properly a religious woman or nun, and is in effect menial ſervant to her ſiſter, being employed by her in any office ſhe may think fit to impoſe, frequently ſerving her as waiting maid, as cook, and often in employments ſtill more degrading.—She wears a habit peculiar to her ſituation which ſhe can never change, a ſort of monaſtick dreſs, coarſe, and of dark brown. One advantage however ſhe enjoys over her ſiſter, that whereas the elder, before marriage, is never allowed to go abroad, or to ſee any man, her neareſt relations only excepted, the Calogria, except when employed in domeſtick toil, is in this reſpect at perfect liberty — But when the ſiſter is married the ſituation of the poor Calogria becomes deſperate indeed, and is rendered ſtill more humiliating by the compariſon between her condition and that of her happy miſtreſs. The married ſiſter enjoys every ſort of liberty—the whole family fortune is her's, and ſhe ſpends it as ſhe pleaſes—her huſband is her obſequious ſervant—her father and mother are dependent upon her—ſhe dreſſes in the moſt magnificent manner, covered all over, according to the faſhion of the iſland, with pearls and with pieces of gold, which are commonly ſequins*; thus continually

* This ſpecies of finery, which prevails through many of the iſlands, is never worn in Metelin but when full dreſs is deemed neceſſary.

tinually carrying about her the enviable marks of affluence and ſuperiority, while the wretched Calogria follows her as a ſervant, arrayed in ſimple homeſpun brown, and without the moſt diſtant hope of ever changing her condition. Such a diſparity may ſeem intolerable, but * what will not cuſtom reconcile? Neither are the misfortunes of the family yet at an end—The father and mother, with what little is left them, contrive by their induſtry to accumulate a ſecond little fortune, and this, if they ſhould have a third daughter, they are obliged to give to her upon her marriage, and the fourth, if there ſhould be one, becomes her Calogria; and ſo on through all the daughters alternately. Whenever the daughter is marriageable ſhe can by cuſtom compel the father to procure her a huſband, and the mother, ſuch is the power of habit, is fooliſh enough to join in teazing him into an immediate compliance, though its conſequences muſt be equally fatal and ruinous to both of them. From hence it happens that nothing is more common than to ſee the old father and mother reduced to the utmoſt indigence, and even begging about the ſtreets, while their unnatural daughters are in affluence; and we ourſelves have frequently been ſhewn the eldeſt daughter parading it through the town in the greateſt ſplendour, while her mother and ſiſter followed her as ſervants, and made a melancholy part of her attendant train.

THE

* To what indeed cannot uſage reconcile us? Perhaps if it were the general cuſtom of the world that in all families children ſhould ſhare alike, we ſhould be as much ſurpriſed at the ſingularity of any particular country where the rights of primogeniture prevailed, as we now are at the Metelinean cuſtom, and ſhould pity the comparative indigence of the ſecond brother as we do the ſituation of the miſerable Calogria.

The ſons, as ſoon as they are of an age to gain a livelihood, are turned out of the family, ſometimes with a ſmall preſent or portion, but more frequently without any thing to ſupport them; and thus reduced, they either endeavour to live by their labour, or, which is more uſual, go on board ſome trading veſſel as ſailors or as ſervants, remaining abroad till they have got together ſome competency, and then return home to marry and to be henpecked. Some few there are who, taking advantage of the Turkiſh law *, break through this whimſical cuſtom, who marry their Calogrias, and retain to themſelves a competent proviſion; but theſe are accounted men of a ſingular and even criminal diſpoſition, and are hated and deſpiſed as conformiſts to Turkiſh manners, and deſerters of their native cuſtoms; ſo that we may ſuppoſe they are few indeed who have the boldneſs to depart from the manners of their country, to adopt the cuſtoms of their deteſted maſters, and to brave the contempt, the deriſion, and the hatred of their neighbours and fellow-citizens.

Of all theſe extraordinary particulars I was informed by the French conſul, a man of ſenſe and of indiſputable veracity, who had reſided in this iſland for ſeveral years, and who ſolemnly aſſured me that every circumſtance was true; but indeed our own obſervation

* It may be aſked, how it happens that the Turks do not exert their ſovereign and abſolute power entirely to aboliſh a cuſtom ſo contradictory to the ſpirit and practice of their laws? But this is eaſily anſwered—In all their conqueſts the Turks, either through mercy or through indolence, have left the natives in poſſeſſion of their own cuſtoms, contenting themſelves with their court of final appeal, and with a ſort of cenſorial power, which they exerciſe with much harſhneſs, to their own great emolument, and to the oppreſſion of their ſubjects by arbitrary fines.

obſervation left us without the leaſt room for doubt, and the ſingular appearance and deportment of the ladies fully evinced the truth of our friend's relation. In walking through the town it is eaſy to perceive, from the whimſical manners of the female paſſengers, that the women, according to the vulgar phraſe, *wear the breeches*. They frequently ſtopped us in the ſtreets, examined our dreſs, interrogated us with a bold and manly air*, laughed at our foreign garb and appearance, and ſhewed ſo little attention to that decent modeſty, which is, or ought to be, the true characteriſtick of the ſex, that there is every reaſon to ſuppoſe they would, in ſpite of their haughtineſs, be the kindeſt ladies upon earth, if they were not ſtrictly watched by the Turks, who are here very numerous, and would be ready to puniſh any tranſgreſſion of their ungallant laws with arbitrary fines. But nature and native manners will often baffle the efforts even of tyranny. In all their cuſtoms theſe manly ladies ſeem to have changed ſexes with the men.—The woman rides aſtride—the man ſits ſideways upon the horſe.—Nay I have been aſſured that the huſband's diſtinguiſhing appellation is his wife's family name.—The women have town and country houſes, in the management of which the huſband never dares interfere.—Their gardens, their ſervants, are all their own; and the huſband, from every circumſtance of his behaviour, appears to be no other than his wife's firſt domeſtick, perpetually bound to her ſervice, and ſlave to her caprice. Hence it is that a tradition obtains in the country, that this iſland was

 formerly

* In the nineteenth Epiſtle of the firſt book, Horace applies an epithet to Sappho which might with great aptneſs be given to her preſent countrywomen:

"Temperat Archilochi Muſam pede maſcula Sappho."

formerly inhabited by Amazons, a tradition however founded upon no ancient hiſtory that I know of. Sappho indeed, the moſt renowned female that this iſland has ever produced, is ſaid to have had manly inclinations, in which, as Lucian informs us, ſhe did but conform with the ſingular manners of her countrywomen; but I do not find that the mode in which ſhe choſe to ſhew theſe inclinations is imitated by the preſent female inhabitants, who ſeem perfectly content with the dear prerogative of abſolute ſway, without endeavouring in any other particular to change the courſe of nature; yet will this circumſtance ſerve to ſhew that the women of Leſbos had always ſomething peculiar, and even peculiarly maſculine, in their manners and propenſities. But be this as it may, it is certain that no country whatſoever can afford a more perfect idea of an Amazonian commonwealth, or better ſerve to render probable thoſe ancient relations which our manners would induce us to eſteem incredible, than this iſland of Metelin. Theſe lordly ladies are, for the moſt part, very handſome in ſpite of their dreſs, which is ſingular and diſadvantageous. Down to the girdle, which, as in the old Grecian garb, is raiſed far above what we uſually call the waiſt, they wear nothing but a ſhift of thin and tranſparent gauze, red, green or brown, through which every thing is viſible, their breaſts only excepted, which they cover with a ſort of handkerchief; and this, as we were informed, the Turks have obliged them to wear, while they look upon it as an incumbrance, and as no inconſiderable portion of Turkiſh tyranny. Long ſleeves of the ſame thin material perfectly ſhew their arms even to the ſhoulder. Their principal ornaments are chains of pearl, to which they hang ſmall pieces of gold coin. Their eyes are large and fine,

and

and the noſe, which we term Grecian, uſually prevails among them, as it does indeed among the women of all theſe iſlands. Their complexions are naturally fine, but they ſpoil them by paint, of which they make abundant uſe, and they disfigure their pretty faces by ſhaving the hinder part of the eyebrow, and replacing it with a ſtrait line of hair, neatly applied with ſome ſort of gum, the brow being thus continued in a ſtrait and narrow line till it joins the hair on each ſide of their face. They are well made, of the middle ſize, and, for the moſt part, plump; but they are diſtinguiſhed by nothing ſo much and ſo univerſally as by a haughty, diſdainful and ſupercilious air, with which they ſeem to look down upon all mankind as creatures of an inferior nature, born for their ſervice, and doomed to be their ſlaves; neither does this peculiarity of countenance in any degree diminiſh their natural beauty, but rather adds to it that ſort of bewitching attraction, which the French call *piquant*.

The peculiar ſingularity of the cuſtom above-mentioned induced me carefully to examine whether any ſimilar uſage had any where exiſted in ancient times, and, after much ſearch, I at length found in Herodotus an account of a cuſtom among the Lycians, which bears a ſtriking reſemblance to this of Metelin, and is, I believe, the only inſtance in all antiquity* at all reſembling

* *The only inſtance in all antiquity.*] I have ſaid in the text that I knew of no inſtance in ancient manners reſembling the cuſtom of the Metelineans, that of the Lycians only excepted. We know however that the Egyptian laws, though there be nothing in them which can induce us to ſuppoſe that any ſimilar uſage exiſted in Egypt, gave to the women of that extraordinary country certain peculiar and ſingular privileges. Diodorus Siculus, Lib. 1. p. 31, after having

reſembling the peculiar privileges of the ladies of that iſland.—" The Lycians, ſays he, lib. 1. p. 82, make uſe of the Cretan " and

having informed us that in Egypt brothers were permitted to intermarry with their ſiſters, in imitation of Iſis whoſe marriage with her brother Oſiris had been productive of ſuch ſignal advantage, &c. proceeds thus.—Διὰ δὲ ταύτας τὰς αἰτίας, " For theſe reaſons," (that is to ſay from the veneration of the Egyptians for Iſis, and from their ſenſe of the benefits which had accrued from her excellent adminiſtration after the death of her huſband) " It has become a cuſtom that " more power and honour ſhould be allotted to the queen than to the king, " and that among private people in their matrimonial contracts, command is " given to the wife over the huſband, the huſbands therein promiſing to obey " their wives in all things."

Herodotus alſo, in his enumeration of the many cuſtoms in which the Egyptians differ from the reſt of mankind, mentions ſome particulars reſpecting their women which ſeem to indicate a marked ſuperiority in that ſex over the other. Among the Egyptians, ſays he, Lib. ii. p. 119, the women tranſact matters of trade and retailing, but the men, remaining in their houſes, weave. And, after ſome other whimſical and ridiculous uſages, he adds in the next page that there is no obligation on ſons to provide for their parents if they ſhould be unwilling, but that, even though againſt their will, daughters are obliged to make ſuch proviſion. Which laſt circumſtance ſeems to imply ſome peculiar advantages in the women reſpecting their patrimony, as it would ſeem unreaſonable that the weaker ſex ſhould be particularly burthened unleſs the laws had furniſhed them with ſufficient ability.

This however is merely conjecture, and the Lycian cuſtom ſtill remains the only inſtance in point. And indeed, notwithſtanding the authorities above cited, there is, in my opinion, much reaſon to doubt that the women in Egypt in reality poſſeſſed any conſiderable degree of ſuperiority. In every country where a plurality of wives is allowed, the fair ſex muſt always be more or leſs degraded, and that Polygamy was permitted among the Egyptians we know from Diodorus Siculus, who tells us, Lib. 1. p. 91, that in Egypt the prieſts were confined to one wife, but that all others might marry as many as they pleaſed.—Γαμουσι δὲ παρ Αἰγυπτιοις οἱ μεν Ιερεις μιαν, τῶν δ αλλων ὁσας ἄν εκαστος προαιρῆται—A cuſtom which appears to me wholly inconſiſtent with the law enforcing obedience in huſbands,

" and Carian laws; one cuſtom however they have peculiar to " themſelves, and in which they agree with no other race of " men. They call themſelves by the names of their mothers and " not of their fathers. If any one ſhould aſk his neighbour who " he is, he deſcribes himſelf by his mother, and recites his ma- " ternal genealogy; and, if a gentlewoman ſhould marry a ſlave, " the children by that marriage ſhall be accounted noble; but, if " a citizen, or even the firſt among them, ſhould take to wife a " foreign woman, or a concubine, the children by that marriage " are degraded or ignoble.—Νομοισι δε τα μεν Κρηϛικοισι, τα δε Καριοισι " Χρεονϛαι, &c." * Plutarch alſo makes mention of this uſage in his

huſbands, ſince the ſituation of the man, who had married many wives, and was bound to obey them all, is too whimſical ever to have exiſted in any country whatſoever. We muſt therefore ſuppoſe that this law, which had been originally enacted in honour of Iſis, and in favour of the ſex to which ſhe belonged, had, through lapſe of time, and the contradictory manners of the people, become obſolete and inoperative. Vide Sophocles. Oedip. Col. page 282 Edit. Stephani, with the note by Camerarius, page 191.

There is likewiſe ſome reaſon to ſuppoſe that in Attica, before Cecrops, as the beſt means of civilizing that hitherto ſavage country, had introduced the practice of marriage, the women enjoyed the privilege of voting in the public aſſemblies, and even that children were named after their mothers. While the connexion between the ſexes was caſual and unreſtrained, who the real father was could ſcarcely be known with any degree of certainty, and the child therefore took the name of the only parent that could be aſcertained.

See for this, and for much other curious information reſpecting the privileges of women in various ages and countries, Millars diſtinction of ranks in ſociety, page 32 to page 37.

* Vide Plutarch, as quoted in the text, for ſeveral fabulous accounts of the ſtory of Bellerophon, one of which contains a circumſtance ſomething to our purpoſe

his Treatiſe upon the Virtues of Women.—Tom. ii, p. 248.—Edit. Par.—And aſſigns as its cauſe, that, when Bellerophon, in revenge for the ingratitude of the people of Xanthus, a principal city of Lycia, who returned him no thanks for having deſtroyed a boar that laid waſte their country, had by his prayers drawn down a curſe of barrenneſs upon the whole region, he was at length induced, by the interceſſion of the women, to deprecate the wrath of his patron Neptune, and to reſtore fruitfulneſs to the ſoil.—" From hence," continues he, " it was a law among the " people of Xanthus to be called after the names of their mothers, " and not of their fathers.—*δια και Νομος ην τοις Ξανθιοις, μη Πατροθεν αλλ' απο Μητρων χρηματιζειν.*

We find too, in a fragment of Nicolaus Damaſcenus, an account of this ſame cuſtom, which is ſtill more to our purpoſe.—*Λύκιοι τὰς γυναῖκας μαλλον ἢ τοὺς ἄνδρας τιμῶσιν, και καλοῦνται μητροθεν. Τας τε κληρονομίας ταις Θυγατρασι λειπουσιν, οὐ τοῖς υἱοῖς.*—Vide Excerpta ex Collectaneis, &c. p. 517.——

" The Lycians honour their women more than their men, and " are named after their mothers.—*They leave the inheritances to* " *their daughters, not to their ſons.*

In

purpoſe, viz.: That this hero not only freed the Lycians from an invaſion of pyrates, but from the *Amazons* alſo, whom he drove out of their country. So that there may be ſome reaſon to ſuppoſe that the Lycian women, by an intercourſe with the Amazons, who had, it ſhould ſeem, dwelt among them, were already previouſly prepared for the introduction of thoſe cuſtoms, which were finally eſtabliſhed in conſequence of their patriotick merit in deprecating the wrath of Bellerophon, and in averting its fatal conſequences.

In conſequence of the ſtriking reſemblance between this cuſtom and that of Metelin, I uſed my beſt endeavours to find out ſome authority for the peopling this iſland from Lycia, but could trace no ſuch origin. The inhabitants of Leſbos were Æolians, and, let us go back ever ſo far, we can only find that the iſland had, in times of the higheſt antiquity, been colonized by the Pelaſgi. However, if we may ſuppoſe that this uſage ſubſiſted among the Lycians ſo late as in the times of Nicolaus Damaſcenus and of Plutarch, that is to ſay in the reign of Auguſtus, and in thoſe of Trajan and of Adrian; and, ſince from the ſilence of ancient writers upon this point, and more eſpecially from the negative authority of Herodotus, who expreſsly ſays that in this inſtance the Lycians agree with no other race of men, we have ſome reaſon to believe that it may not be of very ancient ſtanding in Leſbos, there is no impoſſibility in the ſuppoſition that in the latter ages ſome colony may have paſſed over from Lycia into Metelin, and may have there eſtabliſhed this extraordinary cuſtom, a fact of which the deficiency of hiſtorians in thoſe times may have left us ignorant.

With this flimſy conjecture I was compelled to content myſelf, and, though by no means ſatisfied, had well nigh given up the point, when, happening one day to turn over Diodorus Siculus for ſome other purpoſe, I fortunately, but accidentally, met with a paſſage which had hitherto eſcaped all my painful reſearches, and which I read with a degree of pleaſure only to be conceived by my antiquarian brethren. It ſeems that thoſe Pelaſgi, who under their leader Xanthus, the ſon of Triopas king of Argos, firſt

firſt inhabited Leſbos, had, before their ſettling in that iſland, dwelt for ſome time in a certain part of Lycia which they had conquered, and may of conſequence be ſuppoſed to have brought from thence the uſage in queſtion. The paſſage is as follows, Tom. 1. Lib. v. page 396. Edit Weſſellingii.——

——περι τε Λεσβε νυν λεγειν επιχειρησόμεν.——Ταυτην γαρ την νησον το παλαιον ωκηκασι πλείω γένη, πολλων μεταναστασεων εν αυτη γενομενων. Ερημε γαρ ὔσης αυτης πρώτους πελασγες καθασχειν αυτην τοιω δε τινι τροπω. Ξανθος ὁ Τριοπε των εξ Αργες πελασγων βασιλευων, και καθασχων μερος τι τας Λυκιας χωρας, το μεν πρωτον εν αυτη κατοικων, εβασιλευε των συνακολεθησαντων Πελασγων. υστερον δε παρωθεις εις τον Λεσβον ὔσαν Ερημον, την μεν χωραν τοις λαοις εμερισε, την δε νησον απο των καθοικεντων αυτην Πελασγιαν ωνομασε το πρωτον καλεμενην Ισσαν. υστερον δε γενεαις επτα γενομενε τε κατα Δευκαλιωνα κατακλυσμε, &c.

Let us now endeavour to ſpeak of Leſbos.—Many nations anciently inhabited this iſland, repeated emigrations having been made into it. When yet a deſart the Pelaſgi firſt occupied it, and in this manner—Xanthus the ſon of Triopas, ruling over the Pelaſgi who came from Argos, inhabited a certain part of Lycia which he had ſubdued, and governed the Pelaſgi who had gone thither with him. Afterwards paſſing into Leſbos, then a deſart, he divided the country among his people, and he named the iſland from its inhabitants Pelaſgia, which had before been called Iſſa. But after ſeven ages the deluge of Deucalion happening, &c. &c.

He then proceeds to relate how (many of theſe firſt inhabitants having periſhed) the iſland was in a courſe of ages peopled by various colonies from different nations.

Thus have we traced a poſſible, though very remote ſource of the uſage in queſtion. The diſtance of time, to be ſure, is great; for Triopas, according to Blair, was king of Argos in the year 1553 before Chriſt, or, according to Diodorus, ſtill much earlier, as that hiſtorian places the colonizing Leſbos by the Pelaſgi under the ſon of this prince ſeven ages previous to the flood of Deucalion, which event took place in the year 1503 before the Chriſtian Era. But in the eye and eſtimation of a true antiquarian what are thirty or forty centuries? To ſpeak however ſeriouſly, though I be far from having the boldneſs to deſire that implicit credit ſhould be given to an origin ſo remote as almoſt to tranſgreſs the bounds of hiſtory, conſcious as I am that ſuch a ſpeculation may be liable to ridicule, and aware of ſome objections not eaſy to be anſwered, the coincidence will, I believe, notwithſtanding, be allowed to be curious and very remarkable. The well-known pertinacious adherence to ancient manners among the eaſtern nations may in ſome meaſure excuſe our credulity, and we may ſtill add to our authority by ſuppoſing that this ſame Xanthus may probably have given his name to the Lycian city of that denomination, and conſequently muſt have inhabited that very part of Lycia where, according to Plutarch, the cuſtom is ſuppoſed more immediately to have flouriſhed. It would indeed be whimſically curious if we could allow ourſelves to imagine that a ſingular cuſtom at this day ſubſiſting could be traced back to an origin ſo very remote,

and ſhould have taken its riſe in a period when the world was yet in its infancy; or that the relations of Diodorus and of Plutarch, which, conſidering the times of which they treat, might, with much appearance of reaſon, be deemed fabulous, ſhould be corroborated, and, as it were, authenticated by a cuſtom at this day ſubſiſting.

I SHOULD not perhaps have hazarded giving to the public a relation of ſo extraordinary a nature, had the facts, as I had ſuppoſed when upon the ſpot my notes were taken, reſted ſolely upon my teſtimony, but, having lately found with much ſatisfaction that this ſingular cuſtom is mentioned, though by no means detailed either in its circumſtances or moral conſequences, in the Letters concerning Greece, written from Conſtantinople by Monſieur de Guys, under the title of "Voyage Litteraire." I am the rather emboldened to venture the above detail of an uſage, the exiſtence of which has been thus authenticated, though, from want of ſufficient information, it has been ſlightly and ſuperficially treated; neither can I help expreſſing my ſurpriſe that a matter ſo ſingular in the hiſtory of mankind ſhould have been deficient in point of evidence, or ſhould have eſcaped the notice of ſuch travellers as have ſpent much time in theſe iſlands, and conſequently have had every opportunity of accurate inveſtigation.—Monſ. de Guys, in the preſent inſtance, did not moſt certainly poſſeſs this advantage, not having, as he tells us, been able to verify the fact: "Comme dans le cours de ſes voyages il n'a fait "qu' aborder a cette iſle, et n'y ayant pas fait de Sejour." He had however been informed that in the iſle of Metelin, "Toutes "les proprietés et tous les immeubles appartiennent aux filles, et a "la

" la fille aineè, ce qui emporte l'exhereditation des Garçons."—I was aſſured, continues he, by the firſt inhabitant whom I queſtioned, that the fact was literally true, that the cuſtom was of very ancient date, and that the males had willingly conſented, " A tout ceder a leurs ſœurs pour leur procurer de meilleurs eta- " bliſſements. Ils pourroit, ajoutoit il, s'ils vouloient, reclamer " la Loi turque, qui admet tous les Enfans au Partage des Biens " paternels ou maternels, mais ceux qui voudroient ainſi ſe ſouſ- " traire a la Loi du Pais, ſeroient deſhonorés."—*Voyage Litteraire*, Tom. i. p. 398.

Monſ. de Guys next proceeds to account for the riſe of the cuſtom, which he ſuppoſes to have been very ancient in the iſland; and this he does in a manner which appears to me rather unſatisfactory, by a detail, extracted for the moſt part from Diodorus Siculus, lib. xii. of the bloody quarrels between the Leſbians and the Athenians, and of the many revolutions to which the iſland had been ſubject, concluding with the following remark:—" Or " comme je vois dans toutes ces revolutions les femmes epargneès, " ne furent elles pas d'intelligence avec les nouveaux habitants " pour aſſurer dans leur familles la propriètè des poſſeſſions, et ſe " les attribuer á elles ſeules? Deſquelles eurent etè reconnues " maitreſſes des Biens qui leur etoient auparavant communs avec " leurs maris, l'uſage en fit peutetre enſuite une loi qui ne " peut etre plus favorable pour elles.

WHERE Monſ. du Guys has found, that in all theſe revolutions *the women were ſpared*, I know not, but, be this as it may, there are unfortunately few countries in Greece, or indeed I fear in

the world, where the women might not have had, at ſome period or other, a ſimilar opportunity for encroachment; neither does it appear very probable that they ſhould have made ſuch extraordinary terms with the conquering Athenians, ſince we know, from the experience of all ages, that conquerors are not apt to accept of terms from the women of the vanquiſhed. It is indeed difficult to believe that the ladies would have hazarded, or even thought on, ſo ſtrange a propoſition, unleſs we ſhould ſuppoſe ſome pre-exiſting peculiarity in their manners, and in the ancient cuſtoms of their country, which might induce them to propoſe ſuch wonderful terms, and encourage them with the hope that, if obtained, their men would comply; and this ſuppoſition will bring us back to the early eſtabliſhment of the Lycian uſage, which, having poſſibly grown into diſuſe in a long courſe of ages, may have been renewed upon this occaſion, when the ladies found themſelves ſtrong enough, with the aſſiſtance of the conquerors, to reaſſume that ancient ſuperiority, which, though for a time they might have been compelled to yield, it is highly probable they would never forget; and indeed there is ſome reaſon to ſuppoſe, from the ſilence of hiſtorians, that the cuſtom may not have been always permanent in the iſland, but may have occaſionally ceaſed, and been renewed from time to time.